

Bomber kills 8 'CIA men' in Afghan base attack

Five Canadians also slain, Taliban claim responsibility

AFP, Kabul

Eight Americans possibly working for the CIA were killed when a suicide bomber blew himself up after sneaking into the gym on a US base in Afghanistan on Wednesday, officials and US media reports said.

The Taliban said Thursday it was behind bombings that killed eight Americans reportedly working for the CIA and five Canadians in one of the deadliest bouts of violence against Westerners in Afghanistan.

"We claim responsibility for the attack," purported Taliban spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid told AFP by telephone from an undisclosed location.

Four Canadian soldiers and a woman journalist were also killed when a bomb exploded as their armoured vehicle passed by on Tuesday, in one of the deadliest 24 hours for foreigners in the war-torn country.

The attacks come as the number of US

and Nato-led foreign troops is set to soar to 150,000 to try to halt an increasingly virulent insurgency by the Taliban militia that has made 2009 the bloodiest year for international forces since the 2001 invasion.

Pentagon spokeswoman Lt Col Almarah Belk said the eight Americans died when an attacker detonated a vest packed with explosives on Forward Operating Base Chapman in Khost province -- a key Taliban stronghold.

"Eight Americans have been killed in an attack on RC-East," a US embassy official said, using the military term for a region of eastern Afghanistan.

A spokesman for Nato's International Security Assistance Force (Isaf) said that no US or Isaf military personnel were killed or injured in the bombing.

But the Washington Post newspaper said that most of the eight probably worked for the CIA, which it said was using the Chapman base.

A suicide bomber managed to pene-

trate the base's defences, detonating an explosive belt in a room described as a base gym.

The Post said US sources confirmed that all the dead and injured were civilians, and that most were probably CIA employees or contractors.

It said the attack appears to have killed more US intelligence personnel than have died since the US-led invasion in 2001, adding that the agency has acknowledged the deaths of four CIA officers in Afghanistan since then.

Suicide attacks are a hallmark of the hardline Taliban militia, who are waging a major insurgency to topple the Western-backed government of Afghan President Hamid Karzai and oust the foreign troops.

The United States said last month it had doubled the number of civilian experts working in Afghanistan and was "on track" to meet its goal of nearly 1,000 by the new year. Many are to work in provincial military bases alongside military reconstruction teams.



PHOTO: AFP Ruling Pakistani Peoples Party (PPP) workers and human rights activists shout slogans as they march in a rally to save democracy in Lahore on Wednesday in support of the government.

Militants bomb schools in Pak tribal area

Foreign militants killed in hospital raid

AFP, AP, Khari Miranshah Lahore

Four foreign fighters and a woman were killed in a hospital raid by Pakistani forces while militants blew up two boys' schools yesterday in Pakistan's lawless tribal belt on the Afghan border.

A 21-room government high school and five-room primary school side by side in Shago village of Bajaur district were blown up with explosives overnight, local administration official Muhammad Jameel Khan told AFP.

"It is the work of Taliban militants, they have destroyed several schools in the past in reaction to military operations," Khan said, adding that there were no casualties.

Gul Rehman, a Bajaur education officer, said militants had bombed or set ablaze more than 60 schools in a year in the district, which is at the northern tip of the tribal belt and troubled by Taliban attacks.

Earlier Pak commandos raided a private hospital before dawn in a Taliban stronghold near the Afghan border Thursday, killing four foreign militants and a woman, officials said.

Troops laid siege to the private clinic in Wana, the main town of South Waziristan, at 2:00am (21:00 GMT) sparking gun battles until around 7:00am (02:00 GMT), local administration and intelligence officials said.

The soldiers also captured 27 militants, 10 of whom were wounded in the gunbattle that broke out during the raid in South Waziristan, a Pakistani Taliban stronghold targeted by the army in a major ground offensive in mid-October, the officials said.



PHOTO: AFP Indian artists Major Singh (L) and Kashmir Kaur (R) perform during New Year's Eve celebration at the central jail in Amritsar yesterday. Indians across the nation are greeting the New Year with celebrations and festivities.

Coalition forces urged not to leave Afghanistan in haste

AFP, Islamabad

The Pakistani government warned foreign forces on Thursday not to leave Afghanistan "in haste", saying Islamabad was committed to its role as a US partner in the battle against extremists.

Washington is urging Pakistan to crack down on militant strongholds along its border, but US President Barack Obama unnerved many officials by vowing to begin drawing down US forces in Afghanistan in July 2011.

"The decision to leave Afghanistan should be taken when it is able to look after itself

effectively," foreign ministry spokesman Abdul Basit told a press briefing.

"Stability and peace in Afghanistan is in our strategic interest... We are therefore engaged with the US in ensuring that the new US Afghanistan policy delivers," Basit added.

"Coalition forces should not leave Afghanistan in haste."

Islamabad has expressed concern that Obama's new war strategy, announced in December, could destabilise the region if forces leave before Afghanistan is able to counter a virulent Taliban insurgency alone.

US mulls new sanctions on Iran as year ends

AFP, Washington

The Obama administration seemed more firmly set on pushing for fresh UN sanctions against Iran as Iranian leaders balk at a year-end deadline to engage world powers on their nuclear plans.

However, with a UN diplomatic surprise in New York saying preliminary work on drafting a sanctions resolution is likely to begin in mid-January, President Barack

Obama's team is keeping its options open.

"Even as we leave the door open to engagement," world powers agree that Iran will pay the consequences if it does not meet its international nuclear obligations, said Darby Holland, a State Department spokesman.

The five permanent members of the UN Security Council -- the United States, Russia, China, France, and Britain -- plus Germany are "in

the process of considering next steps consistent with our dual-track policy," he told AFP.

A senior State Department official told AFP on the condition of anonymity that the Obama administration was "pivoting" toward imposing more sanctions against Iran while keeping "the door open to engagement."

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said two weeks ago that Iran had failed to build confidence.

4 killed in Finland shopping mall shooting

AP, Helsinki

A gunman opened fire yesterday in a shopping mall in Finland's second largest city killing four people, Finnish media reported.

Finnish police have told the state broadcaster that 4 people were killed by the gunman in the mall shooting in Espoo.

Police tell Yle that three men and one woman were shot in the shopping centre Thursday morning.

Police say the gunman was born in 1966 and has a criminal record.

A witness said that a man dressed in black began shooting randomly early Thursday morning on the second floor of the mall in Espoo, the country's second largest city.

One witness told the Yle agency that a man dressed in black began shooting randomly early Thursday morning on the second floor of the mall, in the city near Helsinki, the capital.

World bids farewell to a tough year

AP, Sydney

The first of an expected 1.5 million New Year's revelers pitched tents and opened picnic baskets in Sydney on Thursday to get one of the world's biggest parties started bidding farewell to a tough year and welcoming a new decade.

The annual fireworks extravaganza over the city's landmark harbour bridge and opera house are the centrepiece of Australia's celebrations, and generate some of the most striking images from a night of revelry across the globe.

Smaller fireworks displays and partying are planned across Australia and the South Pacific, the first region to greet each new day because of its proximity to the International Date Line.

In New Zealand, dance parties, bands and fireworks were planned in the main cities, and live entertainment in many holiday spots, including the southern tourist spot of Queenstown. In the capital, Wellington, celebrations will include a display by world

unicycle games competitors. Asia will be partying, too, though probably not as hard as most of Europe and the Americas. The world's most populous nation, 1.3-billion-strong China, uses a different calendar that will mark the new year in February. Islamic nations such as Pakistan and Afghanistan also use a different calendar.

Pyrotechnics displays were planned to illuminate Hong Kong's crowded skyline, high-glit parties were planned in Singapore and thousands were expected to gather at Indonesia's national monument in the capital, Jakarta, for a fireworks show.

Millions of Japanese will welcome the new year by flocking to shrines to pray for good fortune in 2010.

In Tokyo, the Sensoji temple was draped with banners greeting the new year in preparation for traditional New Year's day ceremonies when thousands of people come to pray for good fortune. Shoppers mobbed a city, stocking up on seafood and other items.

US embassy issues Bali New Year attack warning

AFP, Jakarta

The US embassy in Indonesia said yesterday it had received warning of a New Year terrorist attack on the resort island of Bali, the scene of multiple bombings targeting Westerners.

"There is an indication of an attack to Bali tonight," it said in a statement to US citizens carried on its website, quoting a message from Bali governor Mangku Pastika.

The embassy said the Bali Tourism Board had widely distributed the governor's message, which added: "Please don't panic, but put your security system to full alert."

Police said 7,000 security personnel including US-trained counter-terrorism units were being deployed around bars and nightclubs on Bali as the island prepared to celebrate the New Year.



PHOTO: AFP Arab and Jewish Israelis and foreign peace activists demonstrate against the ongoing Israeli siege of the Gaza Strip at Erez crossing yesterday.



Indonesians bury former president Wahid

AP, Jakarta

Thousands of mourners thronged roads Thursday in Indonesia to say farewell to late president Abdurrahman Wahid, a beloved, one-eyed cleric who reached out to religious minorities in the world's most populous Muslim-majority nation.

Wahid, who ruled for nearly two years of tumult as Indonesia embarked on a path to democracy in 1999 after three decades of dictatorship, died in a hospital Wednesday. He was 69.

Violence in Kashmir down 25pc

AFP, Srinagar

Violence in the Himalayan region of Indian Kashmir, wracked by insurgency for two decades, was down 25 percent this year, the area's police chief said Wednesday.

In a New Year message, the director general of police in the Jammu and Kashmir region said the number of violent incidents had fallen dramatically from 2008 levels, confirming hopes of a return to normal life.

"The graph of terror violence in the state is rapidly coming down year after year," Kuldeep

Khuda wrote.

In a reminder of the ongoing volatility, however, militants shot dead four policemen in an ambush near the northern town of Sopore on Wednesday, about 50 kilometres (31 miles) north of the Kashmiri summer capital Srinagar.

"Three CRPF (Central Reserve Police Force) personnel died on the spot, while a fourth personnel was injured and died in hospital later," police officer Abdul Waheed said.

He said two rifles of the slain personnel were missing and presumed to have been snatched by the militants.

HITACHI

Inspire the Next

HITACHI

Tokyo, Japan

Year 2010

Enjoy New Year & Winter Holiday with HITACHI !!!

LCD TV

CRT TV

HOME THEATER

AIR CON

GAS BURNNER

AIR CON

AIR CON

WASHING MACHINE

VACUUM CLEANER

Marketed by: **magnum marketing ltd.** 69, Dilkusha C/A (2nd Floor) Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh. Tel : 9563862, 9564447-9, Fax : 8802-9564453, E-mail : info@cargobd.com

Gulshan: Landmark shopping center (1st Floor), 12-14, Gulshan circle-2, Dhaka-1212. Cell: 01911742382, Ph: 9863395

Malibagh: Cell: 01911316155, Ph: 9351949. # Mirpur: Cell: 01712667186, Ph: 9004014 # Savar: Cell: 01715495960. # Laibagh: Cell: 01711157158. # Bogra: Cell: 01711013715 # Khulna: Ph: 041-721760, Cell: 01715594999. # Azampur: Cell: 01712222030, 01815035740.

Muga: Cell: 01921171319. # Kazi Para: Cell: 01715177217 # Faridabad: Cell: 01912848121, Ph: 7443984 # Ibrahimpur: Cell: 01914682700, 01915863337 # Jatrabari: Cell: 01715239922. # Mohammadpur: Cell: 01711020332, Ph: 9128185. # Kushtia: Cell: 01918570813.

Laxmibazar: Cell: 01711384546, Ph: 7125637 # Mymensingh: Cell: 01816466502, 01736221999. # Sylhet: Cell: 01199316620, 01712639594 # Jamalpur: Cell: 01712007351, 098162755 # CTG-01: Cell: 01190715272. # Middle badda: Cell: 01718257085.

Rangpur: Cell: 01718644224 # Rajshahi: Cell: 01712512433, 0721772534 # Narayanganj: Cell: 01715826269, 01674493485. # Bhulta: Cell: 01731161917 # CTG-02: Cell: 01812077020 # Uttara: Cell: 0171262264 # Bangshal: Cell: 01818834973 # Nator: Cell: 01736453542.

For Corporate inquiry, Ph: 9563862, 9564447-9. Cell: 01727209612 e-mail: corporate-mm@cargobd.com. This additional facilities also available at any of our authorized dealers throughout the country